



Published in the interest of the men and women of Joint Force Command District of Columbia



SPECIAL ISSUE

Labor Department adopts DC Guard

*By Staff Sgt. Lorenzo Parnell
DCNG Public Affairs*

Inside this issue:

New 113th Commander	2
Demobilizations	2
State Partner: Jamaica	3
All-American Honors Band	4
Tricare for drilling reservists	7

WASHINGTON—On November 14, 2003 the Department of Labor (DOL) held a ceremony at the Francis Perkins Building – The Great Hall -- to give tribute to veterans and their families. In conjunction with this ceremony the Honorable Elaine Chao, Secretary of Labor, announced that the Department of Labor is adopting the District of Columbia National Guard. Chao spoke words of encouragement to those attending the ceremony.

“Today is a special day to remember and thank all our veterans for their brave service in protecting and preserving the freedoms and liberties that we enjoy every day in our country,” said Chao.

Sergeant First Class Douglass Hall and Technical Sergeant Matthew Profit recently returning from Iraq with injuries that have them hospitalized at Walter Reed Army Medical Center were also recognized



Maj. Gen. David Wherley (left) and Sec. Elaine Chao, Labor Dept. display a certificate that symbolizes the new cooperative agreement between DOL and the DC National Guard. (Photo by Staff. Sgt. Earl Wilson)

by Chao. “You are an inspiration to all of us,” said Chao.

Chao welcomed the distinguished guests on the

(Continued on page 5)



1st Lt. Andre Jones of the 547th Transportation Company Conducts a safety briefing before unit members embark on a mail run.

Mail Runners of Iraq

*Story and photos by
Staff Sgt. Nate Orme
3rd Personnel Command PAO*

*Get your motor running,
Head out on the highway,
Lookin' for adventure,
In whatever comes our way...*

BAGHDAD, IRAQ (Oct. 6, 2003) - Stephenwolf's lyrics could aptly describe what American civilian contract-drivers and their Army escorts do every day in Iraq

while delivering mail to soldiers based throughout the war-torn country.

Leaving the secure confines of the coalition-controlled Baghdad International Airport each morning and heading out onto the dusty sun-drenched highways of Iraq is a daily adventure for the crew of mail runners. At any moment a seemingly leisurely drive can turn deadly. And it has, more than once.

At the airport, units of the 3rd Personnel Command operate the Joint Military Mail Terminal (JMMT) out of a large hanger equipped with loading docks where mail is transferred in and out of MILVAN containers on truck trailers. About eight to 14 truck-

(Continued on page 3)

Capital Guardian Staff

The Capital Guardian is published by the Public Affairs Office, Joint Force Command—District of Columbia, 2001 East Capital Street, Washington, DC 20003-1719; TEL 202-685-9862; FAX 202-685-9861.

It is an unofficial publication authorized under the provisions of AR-360-81 and AFI 35-101. Opinions expressed herein are not necessarily endorsed by the Department of Defense. The Capital Guardian is distributed free to DCNG members and to other interested persons, upon request. Circulation is 3,000.

Commanding General:
Maj. Gen. David F. Wherley, Jr.

DCNG Public Affairs Staff:
Capt. Sheldon Smith, JFHQ-DC Public Affairs Officer
Staff Sgt. Lorenzo Parnell, JFHQ-DC Publications NCO

Army National Guard Units Demobilize



DC Mayor Anthony Williams presents an encased flag to Chief Warrant Officer Dan Moore during a Freedom Salute ceremony held at the Davison Army Airfield in Virginia honoring the 148th Medical Company. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Earl Wilson)

By Staff Sgt. Lorenzo Parnell
DCNG Public Affairs
Maj. Gen. David F. Wherley, Jr. welcomed home several units during January and February 2004. The Army National Guard demobilized the units ending a long awaited return to families and homes.

The units were deployed within the U.S. and played a vital role in the fight against terrorism in Support of Operation Noble Eagle.

District of Columbia
(Continued on page 8)

New 113th Commander Makes History

By Master Sgt. Bob Haskell
National Guard Bureau

ANDREWS AFB, Md. — Colonel Linda McTague has gotten pretty good at regarding herself through the eyes of others. She does not see a pioneer for women's achievements when she looks in a mirror. But she realizes that other people do consider her to be a role model — a pioneer — for what women can accomplish in this country's military service. And she strives very hard to live up to those expectations, as well as to her own.

McTague is in a good position to take that kind of stock in herself because she is the first woman to ever command an Air National Guard wing and because she is believed to be the first of her gender to have an Air Force fighter squadron under her command, according to records at the Air Force history office.

Specifically, the woman from Battle Creek, Mich., assumed command of the District of Columbia Air National Guard's highly-decorated 113th Wing on Dec. 1. She is therefore eligible to become a brigadier general. That diverse wing of some 1,050 men and women includes the 121st

Fighter Squadron of F-16s that is on alert during the war against terrorism and the 201st Airlift Squadron that flies members of Congress and other dignitaries around the world in a fleet of C-38 and C-40 operational support airplanes.

Here's the catch. McTague is not a fighter pilot. She cut her Air Guard aviation teeth as an operational support airlift pilot beginning in 1988 before climbing the ladder to serve as the 201st Squadron's commander for nearly four years beginning in November 1997. She was the first woman to command an Air Guard flying squadron, said Charles Gross, Ph.D., the Air Guard's chief historian.

That, she claimed during a recent interview, is an indication of how much the military culture has changed during the past decade to make it possible for women and members of minorities to reach the level she has attained.

"I don't personally see myself that way, because I've never felt the pressure to be a pioneer. But if I'm realistic about the comments that I hear from other people, I'd have to say that they do see me that way," McTague said. "I know this is something

(Continued on page 6)



Colonel Linda McTague in December took command of the District of Columbia Air National Guard's 113th Wing. She became the first woman in history to take charge of an Air National Guard wing, and she is believed to be the first woman to have an Air Force component fighter squadron under her command. (Photo courtesy of District of Columbia Air National Guard)



State Partnership with Jamaica formalized

*By Staff Sgt. Lorenzo Parnell
DCNG Public Affairs*

On Tuesday, December 9, 2003 the District of Columbia National Guard Deputy Commanding General Errol R Schwartz and State Partnership Program (SPP) Coordinators met with Chief of Staff, Jamaica Defense Force, Rear Admiral H.M. Lewin to discuss ways to build a productive relationship between the two states.

During this visit the Partner State Adjutant and staff representatives met with key U.S. Embassy and Partner Nation Representatives to provide orientation briefings of their respective organizations and facilities, and discuss/identify key exchanges.

"Jamaica wants to establish through the National Guard Bureau a unit that is like them", said Lt. Col. Timothy Spriggs, DCNG State Partnership coordinator. "The Jamaica Defense Force (JDF) and District of Columbia National Guard (DCNG) are similar units. According to Spriggs both states have like entities in several areas. The Washington, DC area thrives on its tourism industry, and tourism is also a major contributor in Jamaica's economy.

(Continued on page 7)

Brig. Gen. Errol Schwartz, Commander, DC Army National Guard (Left) and Rear Adm. H. M. Lewin discuss State Partnership Program goals. During their initial meeting, both officers expressed their views on how to implement plans to mutually support unit requirements of both nations. Both military and community issues were discussed. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Lorenzo Parnell)

Mail-runners

(Continued from page 1)

loads of mail are filled for delivery daily.

Each morning, drivers and their escorts assemble for a safety briefing before heading out. Briefings are not your typical garden variety. Instead, they are full of real-time warnings, life-saving checklists and harrowing stories of recent accidents and ambushes.

Sgt. 1st Class Charity Pope of the 547th Transportation Company, a National Guard unit from Washington D.C., is the "truck master" for the unit.

"I coordinate missions and give the safety briefing. We coordinate with the drivers and keep the route board updated," Pope said. She is helped by unit 1st Lt. Andre Jones, who said his drivers have logged nearly 70,000 miles on 349 missions since the 547th took over force protection duties in July.

Drivers hired by the defense contractor Kellogg, Brown & Root gear up in bullet-proof vests and Kevlar helmets before driving their commercial tractor-trailers. Each truck is equipped with a large Qual-

comm satellite console with phone and email for quick contact to emergency services.

Roy Bartmess, an Army Vietnam veteran, truck driver and police officer from Leesville, La., rode into Iraq from Kuwait on the first mail convoy mid-April to Camp Bushmaster, about 200 kilometers "across the berm" from the Kuwait/Iraq border.

A mail delivery operation continues from the Kuwait JMMT, mostly to service camps within Kuwait, but Bartmess transferred to the Baghdad JMMT. "The living conditions are a little Spartan here, but they're getting better all the time," Bartmess remarked.

Bartmess said the vast majority of Iraqis are friendly and often would ask questions and offer food and drinks to drivers. "When we first got up here, we got to meet the locals and stop at roadside stands," he said.

Unfortunately, due to terrorist incidents, all committed while convoys were moving, such stopping is no longer permitted, Bartmess said.

Mail is delivered to nearly a dozen locations from the Baghdad JMMT, at distances ranging from an hour away, like Fallujah, to six hours away, in the case of Kirkuk.

Convoys sometimes need to pass

through towns, but usually drivers stay on the long stretches of surprisingly good highway and avoid urban areas. But whether in town or seemingly in the middle of nowhere, Iraqi street hawkers often await, trying to sell a plethora of items-from old bayonets to bootleg liquor.

"In Rasheed we drive right through the market. People will crowd around,



Soldiers from the 547th prepare to depart camp to act as force protection for the mail convoy.

buying and selling stuff," Bartmess said, then he shifted to describe the country-"Scenery in some places looks like back home, driving across western

(Continued on page 5)

DC Guard-conceived program seeks to create All-American Honors Band

RESTON, VA (January 20, 2004)-Musicians from the U.S. Army Band program will lead the way in choosing finalists for the first-ever Hershey's All-USA High School Band, representing outstanding high-school age musicians, announced MENC: The National Association for Music Education. The Army Band musicians will select the top 100 students from a pool of up to 300 semifinalists.

A DC Army National Guard musician with the 257th Army Band developed the plan as a way to help the Army build a stronger tie to the community while giving them access to thousands of potential Army musicians. Sgt. Darien Drake developed the framework for what he hopes will become the Army All-American Honors Band.

"When I was a Marine, it was designed as a way to fulfill a need. I submitted the idea to the Marine Corps recruiting command in 1997, but they weren't iterated," said Drake. "Chief Warrant Officer Sheila Klotz zeroed right in on my idea."

Shortly afterwards, Drake and Klotz began working on a foundation for what would become a nation-wide recognition program for superior musicians.

"We really wanted to raise the profile for military music - specifically Army," Drake said.

To minimize the manpower necessary to pull together such an organization, Drake envisioned using All-State selects from the 50 states as a base applicant pool.

Unknown to Drake, MENC was also pursuing a similar endeavor. It wasn't long before the MENC and the 257th Army Band were collaborating on a project that would break new ground in the field of music education.

The U.S. Army Band traces its roots in American history as far back as 1633. In the Colony of Virginia, drummers performed for marching practice during militia drills. According to the U.S. Army, in January 1922 General Pershing ordered Captain Perry Lewis to form The Army Band, which quickly gained stature as a superior musical organization.

Since that time, bands such as the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions and the 1st Infantry Division have received decorations for their performance in combat. Other bands have entertained at official functions, entertained troops, and

traveled throughout the world aiding public relations inside and outside of the United States.

Independent judging teams representing MENC's six divisions, chosen by division presidents and comprised of MENC member teachers, will select the semifinalists. Semi-



As a recruiting method, the 257th Army Band often invites interested students to perform with the Band of the Nation's Capital. After "trying the band on for size," students often want to join. (Photo by Capt. Sheldon Smith)

finalists will be chosen on the basis of 75 percent musical achievement and 25 percent academic achievement. Army Band members will adjudicate audiotapes submitted by semifinalists, judging students on the basis of tone, intonation, technique, accuracy, and interpretation.

Teachers, administrators, or private instructors may honor an accomplished student by nominating him or her for membership in the Hershey's All-USA High School Band.

Nominations must be received by MENC no later than March 15, with the winners announced in October 2004. All-USA Band members will be featured in a national promotion recognizing their commitment to excellence. A special Web site, www.hersheysfundraising.com offers more details.

With support from the 257th Army Band, MENC and Hershey Foods Corporation are the sponsors of the All-USA High School Band.

MENC contributed significantly to this story. For more information on MENC, call 1-800-336-3768, or visit www.menc.org.

Labor Dept. Adopts DC National Guard

(Continued from page 1)

panel. Such guests included Maj. Gen. David F. Wherley, Jr., Commanding General of the District of Columbia National Guard; the Honorable Anthony J. Principi, Secretary of Veterans Affairs; the Honorable Fredrico Juarbe Jr., Assistant Secretary for Veterans Employment Training; and Mr. Robert D. Ravner Jr., vice president of human resources, Home Depot.

During the Adopt-A-Unit presentation to his command Maj. Gen. Wherley spoke on behalf of the DCNG. "The D.C. National Guard is honored to be adopted by the Department of Labor. Our men and women, the 'Capital Guardians,' take pride in the support we give to the nation and the District of Columbia and feel a sense of gratitude by this adoption," he said.

There were more than 150 people on hand to witness the merger between the Department of Labor and the D.C. National Guard. This

partnership will recognize the contributions of the unit's service members, their families and employers. The Department will look for ways to provide support for the unit and families when the unit is deployed.

Additionally, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Ester Peterson Child Development Center, DOL YMCA, and H.D. Woodson Senior High School joined ceremony to salute the veterans and their families.

While giving tribute to the veterans and their families those who give so others may live in peace. "We have 3200 veterans and reserve members working for the Department of Labor who are serving on active duty. America has 26 million veterans and they are responsible for liberating millions of people. That is what our military is doing for the people of Iraq today," Chao said.

As an immigrant, Chao has special appreciation for veterans "The Department of Labor is doing everything to protect the benefits of our citizens," she said.

Mail runners

(Continued from page 3)

Texas. Other places with water and palm trees make you think you're on a tropical isle. We've seen the birthplace of Abraham at Ur and the Gardens of Babylon. I'm getting to see a part of the world I never thought I'd see."

Convoys were originally protected by M16-armed soldiers riding "shotgun," with the drivers in the truck cabs. These "shooters," as they were called, acted as force protection from April, when the first convoy rolled into Iraq, until July, when a switch to "gun trucks" was made.

Spc. Anthony Laidler, an information systems operator-analyst with the 461st Personnel Services Battalion, a Reserve unit from Decatur, Ga., said he rode as a shooter on nearly 100 convoys.

"It was dangerous every day. On one trip we had rocks sling-shot from a vehicle with no tags. They followed us for 20 miles, and it got to the point we had to do something," Laidler said. "I teach law enforcement in the civilian world, so I know when someone is messing with us. We hit the brakes, and I turned and looked (my M16) on them." Laidler said the antagonizers got the message and moved out.

Force protection is now provided by Army transportation units driving gun trucks-5-ton trucks modified with M60 machine-gun mounts-with a truck in the front, middle and rear of each convoy. Each truck has a driver, assistant driver and a gunner who must stand in the back of each truck on the lookout for trouble.

Sgt. John Flamer, a driver with the 547th Transportation Company, a National Guard unit from Washington D.C., has been

driving gun trucks since July, when his unit took over force protection duties.

"I go out almost every day.

This mission is highly interesting-and highly dangerous. We lost Spc. (Darryl) Dent, and Fred (Bryant), a KBR driver. My truck was nearly hit by an IED (improvised explosive device) near Baghdad about two weeks ago. The truck had just passed it when it exploded," said Flamer.

"The first two months it was so hot I'd switch with the gunners. (to give them some relief) Most are mechanics made into gunners," Flamer explained.

One such gunner is Spc. James Nielsen of the 515th Transportation Company from Mannheim, Germany, who has been riding for about a month.

"The road is long, and not a day goes by where I don't say I'm damn tired. But we still have to forge on," Nielsen said. "I also think it is exciting. It keeps me awake. I'm trying to stay on this as long as possible."

Nielsen had already seen things while driving into Iraq at the beginning of the war that he will never forget. "We came into the country across a minefield with things blowing up everywhere. I don't think any type of training could prepare someone for the emotional impact of seeing the things we saw," he reflected.

Terrorists have struck the mail runners -in the form of sniper attacks and IEDs planted along the roadside and remotely exploded when convoys pass by.



On a cold Baghdad morning Sgt. Nebra Singleton (left) and Sgt. Terry McFarland (right) prepare for another day on the road. (Photo courtesy of Sgt. McFarland.)

On Aug. 5 Fred Bryant Jr., a 39-year-old father of three from Jacksonville, Fla., was killed by an IED that exploded as his truck passed over it. Bartmess was a friend of his.

"Fred was a truck driver and damn proud of it," Bartmess said. "He was a big man. You couldn't miss him in a crowd. Work came first for him, but he wasn't all work and no play. Fred had a good time wherever he was going."

The 547th lost one of its own-Spc. Darryl Dent, a 21-year-old transportation specialist who had planned on becoming a doctor one day. Dent was killed by an IED on Aug. 26 while riding as assistant driver. He was laid to rest in Arlington National Cemetery on Sept. 9.

The transportation unit has also had at least two other soldiers injured in attacks who will receive Purple Hearts for injuries sustained in combat. Another soldier has had to use deadly force while protecting the convoy.

McTague takes command

(Continued from page 2)

unique and something that, perhaps, a lot of people are excited about and interested in because it may open paths and opportunities for them that they hadn't thought about before or that they can now do realistically," she added. "It's not just a dream for them now."

McTague said many other women did plenty of pioneering before her, including the civilian Women Air Force Service Pilots who ferried military airplanes overseas and towed targets and served as instructor pilots during World War II.

She does, however, realize she's in the right place at the right time to benefit from a change in attitudes toward women and toward people who are not fighter pilots that was helped, she said, by the change in the law in 1992 that made it possible for women to fly combat aircraft.

"Ten years ago, the culture was such that if you weren't a fighter pilot, you were not going to be the wing commander," McTague said. "Now, we've had women in traditional male fields for awhile, and our senior leadership has pushed the idea that we need to be a

diverse organization, to tap the resources that we have available to us and to not exclude anybody because of race or gender."

And she does not feel out of place in the commander's office because she is not one of the fighter pilots, even though "we exist as a wing to support the fighter mission," she acknowledged. "I've been given the opportunity to do a lot of jobs in this wing over the years, so I think I was pretty well prepared when I was asked to be the commander."

"I don't think I have to fly the airplane to understand the F-16 mission," said McTague who has earned her wings as a command pilot while logging over 5,250 hours in eight kinds of aircraft during her 23 years in uniform. That includes four years as an instructor pilot and Wings of Blue pilot for the Air Force Academy in Colorado.

"I've always relied on the experts, and we have a strong vice commander in Col. Jeff Johnson who does fly the F-16 and knows the missions," McTague added.

Chief Master Sgt. George McCarley predicted that McTague would make an excellent wing commander "because she's level headed

and she listens to her people."

McCarley is the 201st Squadron's superintendent for aircraft generation, and he worked for McTague from March 1991 until October 1994 when she was the squadron's assistant chief and then chief of maintenance.

"She was an excellent pilot, and she didn't know anything about aircraft maintenance when she came to us," McCarley recalled. "But she listened to us, and she always referred to the book to help her make good decisions."

She also learned to respect and to rely on the enlisted force during her tenure in maintenance, said McTague who has since served as commander of the 113th Logistics Squadron and Logistics Group. The D.C. Air Guard's enlisted men and women gave her their highest tribute in 2001 by inducting her as an honorary Chief Master Sergeant.

She spent the past two years as the Air Guard advisor to the director of operations at Headquarters, Air Education and Training Command at Randolph, Air Force Base in Texas, before returning to the 113th Wing as the commander. McTague holds a liberal arts degree and a master's in adult education from

Florida International University, where she received a scholarship to play softball and volleyball.

She then played volleyball on the Air Force team and at the international level when she was a young officer.

Now she considers herself the Air Guard wing's advocate as well as its coach whose most important job is preparedness and "to maximize everybody's potential out here" while maintaining its reputation as a team "that will not settle for being less than the best."

"I want to be a good listener. I have to be a good student of dealing with people," said McTague. "I want to be polite and respectful. I want to try to find the niche where everybody will fit and contribute."

"I want to give people the opportunity to fulfill their personal goals," said the new wing commander who has taken advantage of every chance she has been given to fulfill her own.



Among the many accomplishments of the 113th Wing is the successful completion of deployments in support of operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, and continued support to Operation Noble Eagle. (Photo by Capt. Sheldon Smith)

State Partnership Formalized

(Continued from page 3)

Additionally, Jamaica has one of the best emergency disaster response teams because of its annual hurricane season which frequently effects the Island of Jamaica. Washington DC is the nerve center for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

The introduction phase of the State Partnership Program with the JDF experienced some growing pains. "Since the appointment of Lewin in March 2003 there has been increased relationships between the Jamaica Defense force and District of Columbia National Guard SSP.

Previous visits have involved the JDF weapons exchange. This involved the JDF changing their primary

weapon to the M16 versus the British rifle.

As other phases of the program continued the exchange proton proved to be valuable. The Chaplain exchange followed by the medical were both successful. The subject matter experts (SME) learned valuable insight on each other chaplain and medical services respectively.

Over the three-day visit there were several tasks to be completed. Lead by Spriggs and his effort in-conjunction with the staff at U.S. embassy, Kingston has been a key element to the success of the State Partnership Program. SGM R. Owen Johnson, Military Liaison Officer to Jamaica Defense Force showcased tours of the facilities and a visit to Moneague Training Center where sol-

diers receive boot camp training.

Lewin and Schwartz received several briefs on future plans for the State Partnership Program. Spriggs, and LTC Vincent Moynihan and Johnson briefed leadership on all aspects of the State Partnership Program. briefing, Schwartz presented RADM Lewin with a D.C. National Guard Capitol Guardian Logo place mat.

"This is just a small donation to remind you that D.C. National Guard is proud to be your partner in this program. I am willing to give my full support to the Program," said BGen Schwartz.



The Jamaican Military Band plays during a choral performance hosted by the Jamaican Defense Force. Future collaborative training between the JDF band and the 257th Army Band was among the topics of discussion during the three-day meeting between JDF and DCNG leadership.

New Temporary Health Benefits for Reserves Announced



Access to military treatment facilities on an important benefit to family members of mobilized reservist. Tricare is now available to traditional Guardsmen who are either not eligible for coverage through their civilian employers or are receiving unemployment benefits.

The Department of Defense announced on Feb. 12 that it will implement the "2004 Temporary Reserve Health Benefit Program" for certain eligible Reserve Component sponsors

and their family members.

The Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act and the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for fiscal 2004 authorized new health benefits, some permanent and some temporary. The 2004 Temporary Reserve Health Benefit Program includes three temporary Tricare benefit provisions; some are effective as of Nov. 6, 2003, and all expire Dec. 31, 2004. Total expenditures for these new provisions may not exceed the \$400 million limit established by Congress for fiscal 2004. Tricare Management Activity will

implement the new provisions in phases starting in the spring.

"These new temporary provisions were designed by Congress to improve readiness

and enhance access to care for Reserve servicemembers and their families," said Dr. William Winkenwerder Jr., assistant secretary of defense for health affairs. "We are implementing these new provisions as soon as possible," he said.

One provision temporarily authorizes Tricare medical and dental coverage for Reserve component sponsors activated for more than 30 days and their family members. Eligibility begins either on the day the sponsor receives delayed-effective date active duty orders or 90 days prior to the date the active duty period begins, whichever is later.

A second provision temporarily extends eligibility for Tricare benefits to 180 days under the Transitional Assistance Management Program for Reserve component sponsors who separate from active duty status during the period Nov. 6, 2003 through Dec. 31, 2004, and their eligible family members.

The third provision temporarily extends Tricare medical benefits to Reserve component sponsors and family members who are either unemployed or employed but not eligible for employer-provided

(Continued on page 8)

Demobilizations

(Continued from page 2)

Army National Guard gave a Freedom Salute Ceremony recognizing the valuable role Guard members and their families play in the defense of our nation. During each ceremony soldiers received an impressive array of awards.

Encouraging words from keynote speakers such as Command Sgt. Maj. Frank Lever III, Army National Guard; Maj. Gen. (ret. USMC), Bobby G. Hollingsworth, executive director, National Committee for Employer Support to the Guard and reserve, and DC Mayor Anthony Williams.

"The most important aspect of the ceremony is to acknowledge the families. The families are like the unsung heroes of the whole War," said Sgt. Maj. Patricia Williamson, enlisted personnel manager, DC Army National Guard.

The units that have returned since January 19 are 276th Military Police Company, deployed to Bolling AFB, Washington, D.C.; the 104th Maintenance Company deployed to Ft.

Dix, N.J.; and Det. 1, 148th Medical Company (Air Ambulance) deployed to Ft. Hood Texas. The 148th also serviced Ft. Sill, Okla.; Ft. Riley, Kan.; Ft. Carson, Colo.; and Ft. Bliss, Texas.

The deployed units served approximately one year at each installation and provided major support as part of the parent units there.

"We want welcome all of you home and your service is greatly appreciated," said Wherley. "A special thanks goes out to the family



Maj. Gen. David F. Wherley presents special encased flag to Staff Sgt. Hyo Cho of the 276th Military Police Company. The 276th served at Bolling AFB for one year providing security and force protection.

members who hold it all together while Guard members defend our nation. Thank you for a job well done.

Tricare

(Continued from page 7)

health coverage. These temporary provisions end on Dec. 31, 2004.

"We encourage Reserve component sponsors and family members to save health care receipts, claims and explanation of benefits for dates of service from Nov. 6, 2003, through Dec. 31, 2004.

This is necessary in the event the sponsor is determined to be eligible and the care qualifies

for retroactive Tricare reimbursement once the 2004 Temporary Reserve Health Benefit Program begins," said Winkenwerder.

The three permanent health benefit provisions of the NDAA include: benefit counselors for the Reserve component in each Tricare region; authorization for medical and dental screening and care for members alerted for mobilization; and Tricare eligibility for reserve officers pending orders to active duty following commissioning.

Additional information for Reserve compo-

nent families, who have questions regarding the Tricare benefit or need assistance processing Tricare claims, are available on the Tricare Web site at <http://www.tricare.osd.mil/> [<http://www.tricare.osd.mil/>] and the Reserve Affairs Web site at <http://www.defenselink.mil/ra>.

Each Tricare region will soon have a designated beneficiary counseling and assistance coordinator available to assist members and families with understanding and using their enhanced Tricare benefits.



Taking Care of our Troops

DC National Guard senior Leadership traveled to Ft. Eustice, Va., to check on the status and well being of soldiers in the Medical Hold Company there. With growing concerns about the duration of active duty orders and medical profiles commanders went with the group to evaluate their soldiers' individual situations.

Led by Col. Estelle Cooke-Sampson, State Surgeon and Medical Command commander, the group reviewed records to ensure proper treatment of DCARNG soldiers. Meanwhile, SGM Patricia Williamson State Personnel Manger secured an extension of orders for all individual soldiers within hours of arrival. Col. Estelle Cooke-Sampson worked with soldiers assigned to Medical Hold Company to resolve issues discovered during the mobilization process. Similar issues were recently brought to national attention at Ft. Stewart, GA.